

We claim:

1. A method of providing a configurable intermediary between a client device and a digital processing system, the method comprising:
 - receiving from the client device a peripheral device signal representative of an event generated by a peripheral device connected to the client device;
 - processing the peripheral device signal to generate an intermediary signal, the intermediary signal having a selectable, standardized format capable of being understood by the digital processing system; and
 - transmitting, to the digital processing system, the intermediary signal.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein processing the peripheral device signal to generate an intermediate signal includes selecting the standardized format based on parameters of the digital processing system.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of processing the peripheral device signal is executed on a server processor capable of communication with the client device via a communications channel.
4. The method of claim 3 wherein the communications channel is the Internet.
5. The method of claim 4 wherein the client device is a television set-top box.
6. The method of claim 1 or 5 wherein the digital processing system is a billing system.
7. The method of claim 1 or 5 wherein the digital processing system is an information delivery system.
8. The method of claim 1 or 5 wherein the digital processing system is an information logging system.
9. The method of claim 1 or 5 wherein the digital processing system is an information storage system.
10. The method of claim 1 or 5 wherein the digital processing system, in response to receipt of the intermediary signal, executes an e-commerce transaction process.
11. The method of claim 1 or 10 wherein the digital processing system, in response to receipt of the intermediary signal, provides an application program and e-commerce user interface that supports interactive e-commerce between a user of a client device and one or

more vendors, by permitting the user to select items from a menu of product/service categories, and then registering the user's purchase of one or more items from the categories.

12. The method of claim 11 further comprising:
providing the e-commerce user interface on a set-top box.
13. The method of claim 11 further comprising:
providing the e-commerce user interface on a personal computer.
14. The method of claim 11 further comprising:
providing the e-commerce user interface on an Internet appliance.
15. The method of claim 11 further comprising:
providing the e-commerce user interface on a device capable of connecting to the Internet via a wireless or wire-line channel.
16. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
receiving peripheral device signals from each of a plurality of client devices;
selecting, for each of the received peripheral device signals, a respective, selectable, standardized format associated with the respective peripheral device signal and a selected one of a plurality of digital processing systems;
processing the respective peripheral device signal to generate an intermediary signal with a format capable of being processed by the selected digital processing system;
routing and transmitting, to appropriate ones of the plurality of digital processing systems, respective intermediary signals.
17. The method of claim 1, 5 or 16 wherein the peripheral device signal is a peripheral device identifier.
18. The method of claim 17 wherein the peripheral device identifier is associatable with a subscriber to a service provided by an entity and implemented by the digital processing system.
19. The method of claim 18 wherein the peripheral device identifier is associatable with a credit card number for billing.
20. A method of using a configurable intermediary between a client system and a first source of software or data to respond to events generated by a peripheral device connected to the client system, the method comprising:

receiving from the client system a peripheral device signal representative of an event generated by a peripheral device connected to the client device;

processing the peripheral device signal to generate an intermediary signal, the intermediary signal having a selectable, standardized format capable of being understood by the first source, and

responding to the event generated by the peripheral device, by executing a corresponding function, without intervention by the user of the client system, wherein the function is executed with reference to software or data obtained from the first source of software or data in response to receipt of the intermediary signal, wherein the responding includes:

opening, in response to the intermediary signal, a communications channel between the client system and the first source, to enable access to any of libraries, packaging or configuration data on the first source to establish a repository of device drivers and supporting applications suitable for the peripheral device.

21. The method of claim 20 wherein the function includes navigation to a Web site.

22. The method of claim 20 wherein the function includes initiation of an e-commerce transaction.

23. The method of claim 22 wherein the e-commerce transaction is initiated after navigation to a predetermined web site capable of supporting an e-commerce transaction.

24. The method of claim 23 further including:

providing, in response to a detected event, an application program and e-commerce user interface that supports interactive e-commerce between a user and one or more vendors by permitting the user to select items from a menu of product/service categories, and then registering the user's purchase of one or more items from the categories.

25. The method of claim 24 further including:

providing the e-commerce user interface on a set-top box (STB).

26. The method of claim 24 further including:

providing the e-commerce user interface on a personal computer (PC).

27. The method of claim 24 further including:

providing the e-commerce user interface on an Internet appliance.

28. The method of claim 24 further including:

providing the e-commerce user interface on a device capable of connecting to the Internet via a wireless or wire-line channel.

29. The method of claim 20 further including:
logging device activity into a database.
30. The method of claim 29 wherein the database is an Extensible Markup Language (XML) database.
31. The method of claim 29 wherein device activity is logged into a billing system.
32. The method of claim 31 wherein at least a portion of the billing system or information logged thereto can be stored in a client system capable of communication with the peripheral device.
33. The method of claim 31 wherein at least a portion of the billing system or information logged thereto can be stored on a remote server.
34. The method of claim 20 further including:
detecting a new event type not previously encountered or supported by the client system, and
opening a communications channel with the first source to obtain a package of software or data specifying a response to the new event type.
35. The method of claim 20 further including:
permitting device-driver-originated events to initiate interaction with a user of the peripheral device, via a user interface.
36. The method of claim 35 further including:
permitting the user, following initiation of interaction, to control the peripheral device through the user interface.
37. The method of claim 20 further including:
utilizing a standard format to define device driver packages.
38. The method of claim 20 further including:
utilizing a standard format to communicate device event-specific data.
39. The method of claim 20 further including:
utilizing a standard format to communicate runtime data.